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NATO EXPANSION IN THE POST COLD WAR ERA
THE CASE OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

by

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Preface

As my wife and I recently strolled across the Charles Bridge in Prague, we were amazed at the transformation of the city. During our first visit in 1991, the city was enchanting but the specter of 40 years of communist government was evidence by the heavy pollution and general dreariness throughout the city. During subsequent visits we watched the evolution from totalitarian influences to democracy and capitalism. The streets brightened and free market commerce exploded. Twice, I had the opportunity to fly USAF aircraft into Prague's Ruznye airport as the Czech Republic reached out to the United States and NATO for assistance in its evolution. This is why I wanted to use a case study of the Czech Republic to investigate NATO expansion in the post-Cold War era. With my parents living there since 1990, I've seen first hand the positive influence of a NATO strategy that encouraged cooperation with former East Bloc countries. I'm sure anyone visiting Warsaw or Budapest would have the same experiences.

I would like to thank three people for their assistance. First, despite being new on staff, Major Greg Church agreed to let me be his fourth research student, a heavy load even for a seasoned instructor. He was a great faculty advisor because he was always available for consultation and his feedback really helped me stay focused on my topic. Second, Diana Simpson, the ACSC librarian, was a big help in getting my research efforts started as she pointed me to several valuable sources. Finally, and most importantly, I want to thank my wife, Lisa. She is my best critic and my faithful editor and encouraged me throughout the process as she read numerous rough drafts. As is usually the case, I could not have done it without her.

Abstract

During its first forty years, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) successfully deterred Soviet expansion in Europe. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has moved from confrontation with the East Bloc to cooperation, partnership and dialogue with most of Europe. As Yugoslavia disintegrated and the Balkans erupted in violence, the alliance broadened its historically defensive military strategy to include “out of area” peace operations. NATO’s focus changed from collective defense to collective security. NATO chose to expand its membership as part of this process with Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic joining in 1999. At the same time, NATO revised its Strategic Concept to codify its collective security focus while also leaving the door open for future expansion. What should the entrance criteria be for future NATO members? A case study of the Czech Republic’s progress towards accession in the 1990s provides a framework to analyze the relationship between expansion and the alliance’s Strategic Concept of cooperation and collective security. Specifically, the Czech Republic not only met basic entrance requirements, but also used NATO’s Partnership for Peace program and peacekeeping operations in Bosnia to ensure their membership bid.

Part 1

Introduction

The NATO of the nineties will not be the NATO of the eighties...Our Alliance is evolving: we are adapting to the new circumstances and will continue to do so as we shape European history.

— Manfred Worner, NATO Secretary General, Nov 1990

The 1990s were truly an evolutionary decade for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It shifted from confrontation with the East Bloc to cooperation, partnership and dialogue with most of Europe. As Yugoslavia disintegrated and the Balkans erupted in violence, the alliance broadened its historically defensive military strategy to include peace operations: first as a peacekeeping force in Bosnia and then as a peacemaking force in Kosovo. Current Secretary General George Robertson recently summarized the alliance's evolution:

Over the course of the 1990s, this alliance has adapted its political and military tools to cope with conflicts in the Euro-Atlantic area. We have opted for political and military cooperation across the continent. We engaged Russia and Ukraine constructively and we changed our strategy and force structures to better respond to the challenge of peace operations: with more mobility, more flexibility and more partner involvement.¹

At its 50th Anniversary celebration, the alliance capped its evolutionary decade with the addition of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic and the unveiling of a revised Strategic Concept that not only codified "out of area" peace operations but also promised future expansion.

The relationship between NATO expansion and its revised Strategic Concept raises important questions for future expansion. As the alliance broadens from collective defense to

collective security, “what should be the standards for selecting new members (and) what is NATO trying to achieve by enlarging further?”² To analyze the relationship between expansion and the Strategic Concept a case study of the Czech Republic’s admission process will be used. NATO considered five basic categories in the first round of expansion that provide a framework for analysis. They include: democratic government, a free market economy, civilian control of the military, stable relations with neighboring countries, and interoperability with NATO military standards.³ Analyzing Czech progress in each area reveals the relevancy of these requirements to future expansion. If entrance requirements do not support the Strategic Concept, they need to be reexamined. Furthermore, because NATO plans to expand in the future, it is important to find any other expansion criteria that may support the Strategic Concept.

NATO Debates in the post Cold War Era

This paper examines the relationship between NATO expansion and its revised Strategic Concept. To limit its scope, only one of the three new alliance members is studied. Additionally to further limit the paper’s scope, three debates concerning NATO that emerged in the post Cold War era will not be covered. The first debate is about the continuing need for NATO. With no eminent threat to alliance-members, NATO could be dissolved much like its nemesis the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO).⁴ The revised Strategic Concept silenced some of this debate but it resurfaces whenever future NATO expansion is discussed. The second and broadest debate is about NATO expansion. In “The Dilemma of Expansion,” Zbigniew Brzezinski says some basic questions are “*whether, and if so, why, when, where, and how much* next to expand, and eventually where to stop.”⁵ There are a multitude of perspectives. For example, many consider the impact on Russia. Will they be threatened, marginalized, or discouraged about future democratization?⁶ Conversely, will alliance decision making be complicated by over

sensitivities to Russia?⁷ Alternatively, why not include Russia in expansion to ensure its democratization and counter a future Chinese threat?⁸ These are only a few of the issues surrounding the debate on expansion.⁹ The third debate is the newest and it centers on NATO's revised Strategic Concept, primarily the alliance's commitment to out of area operations.¹⁰ A less publicized part of the debate concerns the alliance's continued reliance on a nuclear strategy.¹¹ These debates are worthy of further study, however this paper concentrates on the relationship between NATO's strategy and expansion by looking at the Czech Republic's admission process.

Notes

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Part 2

Background

NATO Expansion and Strategy During the Cold War

The Parties may, by unanimous agreement, invite any other European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this treaty.

— Article 10, North Atlantic Treaty, 4 April 1949

During the Cold War, alliance members used Article 10 to expand three times. Turkey and Greece acceded in 1952, West Germany in 1955 and Spain in 1982. The first three countries joined shortly after the alliance formed and primarily as the result of Cold War deterrence while Spanish accession 30 years later reflected a shift in alliance strategy. Efforts towards European integration supplemented Cold War deterrence. Although not geographically “North Atlantic,” Greece and Turkey felt they belonged as much as initial signatory Italy so they petitioned for admittance soon after the alliance formed.¹ Furthermore, their admission gave the alliance access to the Middle East while at the same time extending the East Bloc’s southern flank. At the same time, the process to admit West Germany started because NATO feared a Soviet sponsored invasion from East Germany following North Korea’s invasion of South Korea. An accession plan was developed to admit West Germany with their rearmed military under NATO control. However, it disintegrated when the French parliament failed to ratify it because of

concerns about German rearmament. Finally, three years later West Germany joined NATO and the newly formed Western European Union (WEU), an alternative pan European body outside of NATO that would control the German troops.² Early expansion was clearly driven by Cold War deterrence but the delay in West German accession also highlighted the complexities of European alliances.

Like early expansion, NATO strategy was shaped by Cold War realities as well as the complexities of European politics. Initial alliance strategy emphasized proportional participation based on geographic position, industrial capability, population and military capabilities with military planning broken down into five regional planning groups responsible for territorial defense.³ After the Korean War scare, NATO quickly transformed from a treaty based alliance into a living organization with an integrated military command structure under the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) and a permanent civilian Secretary General heading the political structure of the North Atlantic Council (NAC).⁴ By 1957, NATO's strategy was based on "Massive Retaliation" with nuclear weapons to any form of Soviet aggression.⁵ This caused bitter debate in the alliance. The Cuban Missile Crisis and two Berlin Crises strained the policy in its first five years of existence because European leaders feared French President Charles de Gaulle might be correct in his assessment that, "No US President will exchange Chicago for Lyon."⁶ The alliance eventually shifted to a "Flexible Response" strategy that provided graduated options to crisis; however, by the time the strategy was published, France had left the alliance's military structure to pursue its own nuclear strategy.⁷

NATO's last published Cold War strategy was based on "Flexible Response." However, in 1967 Belgian Foreign Minister Pierre Harmel chaired a committee that produced the landmark Harmel report. It was the basis for NATO's dual track security policy through the rest of the

Cold War: strong conventional capability coupled with dialogue with the East Bloc. Alliance members upgraded their military capabilities while diplomatic advances with the East Bloc produced arms control talks.⁸ Interestingly, NATO's only expansion during this period had less to do with the Cold War and more to do with European integration. One reason Spain joined in 1982 was because France made admission to NATO an unwritten prerequisite for Spanish admission to the European Commission, forerunner to the European Union (EU).⁹ Spain had recently emerged from decades of dictatorship and NATO membership was a step toward European integration, much like the process of NATO expansion in the post-Cold War era.

Evolution of NATO in the 1990s

North Atlantic Cooperation Council and the Partnership for Peace

With the end of the Cold War, NATO's transition from confrontation to cooperation started with political dialogue under the auspices of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC). Formed in 1991, the NACC provided former WTO and other non-aligned European countries a forum to discuss defense requirements and security issues. In 1994, the Partnership for Peace (PfP) initiative translated political dialogue into military cooperation with the goal of increasing stability and security throughout Europe. It evolved into a permanent part of the European security environment with more than 2000 activities ranging from large military exercises to small workshops grouping a handful of people. Each activity aimed at increasing transparency in national defence planning and military budgeting, ensuring democratic control of armed forces, and developing partner country forces better able to operate with those of NATO members.¹⁰ As Jeffrey Simon said, "it established the norm that partners should be

‘contributors’ and marked a shift from purely multilateral dialogue to bilateral (partner and Alliance) relationships.”¹¹

Bosnia

PfP’s launch came at a critical juncture for NATO. At that time, NATO’s only official roles in Bosnia were enforcing the U.N. no-fly zone with aircraft and enforcing the U.N. weapons embargo with naval forces in the Adriatic.¹² Nine alliance members contributed ground forces to the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) prior to NATO control of the operation. Conversely, the US did not provide ground troops, but instead focused its efforts on the air mission. In the summer of 1995, NATO airpower forced the Bosnia Serbs to sign the Dayton Peace accords and UNPROFOR transferred peacekeeping operations to NATO. The alliance established the Implementation Force (IFOR) and took its first large step “out of area” and into peacekeeping. As Robert Hunter, US ambassador to NATO from 1993-1998 said, “In a very real sense, Bosnia saved NATO” by proving the relevance of the moral and political basis of security.¹³ In 1996, IFOR was replaced by SFOR (Stabilization Force) as troop levels were cut from 60,000 to 31,000. To date, all alliance members and most PfP participants, including Russia, provide troops to the operation on a rotational basis.¹⁴

1997: Russia/Ukraine Agreements and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council

As NATO’s peacekeeping operation in Bosnia matured, the alliance moved forward on several other cooperative fronts with 1997 being a banner year. First, special partnership agreements were signed with Russia and the Ukraine. The former established the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) as a venue for consultations, coordination, cooperation and consensus building between Russia and NATO while the latter established the NATO-Ukraine Commission for similar purposes.¹⁵ Russia has shown intermittent interest in the PJC, formally suspending

its involvement during the Kosovo crisis. Conversely, the Ukraine has actively used the forum to establish closer cooperation with NATO as well as better relations with neighboring NATO and PfP countries.¹⁶ More importantly, at the time they were signed, both agreements helped minimize both Russian and Ukrainian concerns over accession invitations given to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic latter that same year.¹⁷

Another big change for the alliance in 1997 was the establishment of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). It not only replaced the NACC, but also placed the PfP under its direction. Furthermore, most EAPC partner countries established diplomatic offices at NATO headquarters.¹⁸ In 1997, PfP also received a more operational role with greater partner involvement in decision-making. Several NATO military headquarters established PfP staff elements to take advantage of experience gained from cooperative efforts in IFOR/SFOR.¹⁹

Combined Joint Task Force and European Defense and Security Initiative

NATO's evolution in the 1990s also included changes to its military force structure. In most cases, alliance members reduced conventional ground, air and naval forces by 30% to 40% while also reducing levels of readiness. As member nations drew down their respective armed forces after the Cold War, NATO started streamlining its integrated military command structure targeting a reduction of command headquarters from sixty-five to twenty by 2003. The new structure was based on the Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) concept developed to project NATO power rapidly and effectively.²⁰ These reforms took place in conjunction with a revised relationship with the WEU called the European Defense and Security Initiative (EDSI). It allowed NATO forces to be used for European only military operations.²¹ Because of these developments, Spain finally started integrating into NATO's military structure while France returned to it after 30 years of only participating politically.²²

Kosovo and Expansion

NATO's evolution peaked in the final 18 months of the millennium as two watershed events unfolded: offensive military action in Kosovo and the accession of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. First, as the crisis in Kosovo unfolded, NATO's two major concerns were peaceful resolution via the international community and the stability and security of neighboring PfP partners Albania and Macedonia. In June, the NAC ordered military planners to draw up use of force options in the event peaceful solutions failed. As the situation deteriorated in October, the council authorized air strikes but cancelled them for last minute diplomatic visits by NATO leaders and US envoys. In eleventh hour negotiations, Milosevic agreed to a UN sanctioned Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) to monitor Serbian troop levels in the region.²³

In February and March of 1999, the Contact Group (France, Italy, Germany, Russia, UK and US) conducted successive rounds of peace talks with Serbia and the Kosovar Albanians. NATO reinforced the Contact Group by agreeing before the talks to use air strikes if negotiations failed. As the second round closed in March, Serbia refused to sign the peace accord signed by the Kosovar Albanians and more Serbian forces began moving into the Kosovo province in violation of the October agreements. Ethnic cleansing intensified, the KVM pulled out and NATO began its 78-day bombing campaign.²⁴ Despite some heated debate over bombing pauses as well as over the elimination of ground forces as an option, the alliance held together.²⁵ Serbia eventually capitulated and withdrew its forces with NATO's KFOR moving in to ensure the peace. Likewise, NATO played a critical role in assisting fleeing refugees during the period leading up to the bombing campaign. When the bombing intensified the refugee crisis, NATO recognized the large humanitarian, economic and political burden placed on Albania and Macedonia. NATO forces delivered and distributed thousands of tons of food, water, equipment, tents and medical supplies to help reduce the stress on their partner nations.²⁶

Despite the distractions of the Kosovo crisis, NATO's admittance of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic moved towards completion during this same time-period. Legislatures in each alliance country considered NATO's expansion plan and unlike France's delay of West German accession 46 years earlier, all 16 members countries ratified the protocol.²⁷ In March of 1999, NATO's membership grew by three, culminating a process that formally began five years earlier at the Brussels Summit and informally as soon as the Berlin Wall fell. Amazingly, in the middle of the Balkan bombing campaign, NATO celebrated its 50th Anniversary at the Washington Summit. Kosovo topped the agenda but the alliance also managed to announce its revised Strategic Concept, adopt a Membership Action Plan (MAP) for future expansion, enhance the EDSI recognizing the increasing role of the EU, strengthen the Pfp process in the EAPC, and launch a new Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI) to improve the mobility, deployability and command and control systems of the Alliance forces.²⁸ It was the only fitting way to end an evolutionary decade for NATO. European security had evolved into a complex web of alliance organizations with NATO focused on leveraging all of them to ensure collective security for the region.

Notes

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Part 3

Analysis

Czech Case Study

NATO membership amounts not to the mere protection of one's own state security, paid for by the obligation to assist some other country now and again—that is to say, by our readiness to protect others in exchange for their preparedness to protect us. Rather, it is the manifestation of a certain spirit: the spirit of the love of freedom, the spirit of solidarity, the spirit of the will to protect, together, our common cultural wealth, the alliance spirit which is not opportunistic but which—if I may use the expression—is moral.

— Vaclav Havel, President of the Czech Republic, 1999

President Havel wrote these words to commemorate his country's entrance into NATO. He also stated that respect for human rights, democracy, freedom of expression and market economies were the glue that held the alliance together.¹ The revised strategic concept fit well with his vision of NATO: an alliance not only concerned with collective self-defense, but one also willing to prevent conflict and manage crisis. NATO vowed to protect the values binding alliance members together. Interestingly, in 1990 as the East Bloc crumbled, Havel proposed integrating the WTO into NATO to form a single European security system based on NATO's democratic principles.² Although militarily impractical and a non-starter politically, the idea foreshadowed the alliance's shift in strategy from thwarting Soviet expansion to cooperation and

partnership throughout Europe. When NATO formalized its intentions to reach out to the former East Bloc, the Czech Republic was ready.

In 1995 when NATO started seriously looking at possible candidates for entrance, two new nations, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, joined Poland and Hungary as front runners for membership. The Czech Republic was an infant country born on 1 January 1993 after the “Velvet Divorce” divided Czechoslovakia into the independent nations of Slovakia and the Czech Republic. The term “Velvet” came from Czechoslovakia’s “Velvet Revolution” in 1989 when communism was scraped for democracy. In both cases, the changes were peaceful. Furthermore, during the time Yugoslavia was splintering, bids for NATO membership by the Czech Republic and Slovakia validated the evolution of alliance strategy. Membership could produce cooperation rather than confrontation.

Czechoslovakia traced its origin to the end of World War I when the Austro-Hungarian Empire disintegrated. It declared independence in October of 1918 and enjoyed democratic government for nearly 20 years. In May of 1938, France, Great Britain, Italy and Germany signed the Munich agreement that allowed Germany to annex the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia. Six months later Germany occupied the majority of Czechoslovakia and controlled the country until May of 1945. Czechoslovakia then enjoyed a brief period of democracy until 1948 when a totalitarian regime took power and moved the country completely under the wing of the Soviet Union. In 1968, the Czechoslovakian government introduced moderate political and economic reforms in a movement known as the “Prague Spring.” The Soviet Union and several other WTO nations invaded and crushed the democratic reformers. Rigid communist rule was reinstalled and remained in place until the Velvet Revolution.³ During communist rule, the Czech and Slovak regions retained some autonomy in a federalized

system. However, power remained centralized in the Communist Party because of its constitutional authority to invalidate any state government initiative.⁴

Democratic Government

Democracy was a natural entrance requirement for NATO. The Preamble to the Washington Treaty said signatory countries were “founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law.”⁵ With strong democratic roots traced back to the 1918-1938 and 1945-1948 periods, and even to the Prague Spring of 1968, it was not surprising that as the Iron Curtain crumbled, democratic government swept in to fill the void in Czechoslovakia. On 29 November 1989, after one week of peaceful demonstrations and five days of strikes, the Federal Assembly abolished the Communist party’s constitutional stranglehold on government. Then, two weeks later both the communist Prime Minister and President resigned and a new government formed with half the cabinet posts filled by non-Communists. On 29 December, the Federal Assembly elected play-write and former dissident Vaclav Havel to be President. In his New Years address, he triumphantly declared to his countrymen, “your government has returned to you!” Six months later, Havel’s Civic Reform party captured 88 of 150 seats in the House of the People and 82 of 150 seats in the House of Nations. Conversely, the Communist party garnered only 22 seats in each house.⁶ Czechoslovakia’s people wanted democracy to stay. At the same time, NATO also began taking its first steps towards a new strategy of cooperation; democratic revolutions like the Velvet Revolution encouraged this shift.

A difference of opinion on the pace of democratic reforms in Czechoslovakia caused the Velvet Divorce. After the revolution, Slovaks pressured the government into changing the country’s name from the Czechoslovakian Federal Republic to the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic (CSFR). As mentioned above, Constitutional amendments during communist rule

allowed for a federal system with autonomy for the Czech and Slovak regions. As the newly elected legislature worked to rewrite the constitution, the most contentious issue was the structure of this federal system. Czechs wanted fast paced democratic reforms that gave citizens the maximum amount of rights while Slovaks favored national interest over individual rights as well as slow integration of democratic reforms. After the June 1992 elections, it was apparent a compromise would not be reached. The Slovak National Council overwhelming voted for a declaration of sovereignty in July and President Havel resigned shortly thereafter. Finally, in November the Federal Assembly passed a constitutional bill to end the CSFR and give governing power to each state's National Council (government).⁷

Democracy remained firmly entrenched after the split from Slovakia. The new Czech constitution effective 1 January 1993 established a bicameral parliament with a popularly elected Chamber of Deputies and Senate with all Czech citizens over the age of 18 retaining the right to vote.⁸ Initially, Czech National Council members filled the Chamber of Deputies. The Czech Senate remained unfilled because the Council did not want federal deputies from the old CSFR to fill Senate seats. On 26 January, the new Czech Parliament (minus the Senate) elected Vaclav Havel President (five-year term). Per the new constitution, he appointed a prime minister who recommended appointees for cabinet positions. Furthermore, the new constitution transferred much of the president's legislative power to the Prime Minister. The relationship between President and Prime Minister was similar to the German model with the former being the head of state and the latter being the head of government.⁹ Likewise, as Czech democracy held fast, it was reinforced by their participation in the NACC. Dialogue with NATO's democratic nations during this period buoyed the Czech democracy.

By the time the Czech republic acceded to NATO in 1999, four fair and free popular elections had taken place while the budding democracy withstood its first major government scandal. In June 1996 Chamber elections, Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus' Civic Democratic Party (ODS) retained enough seats to hold its three party coalition government together while November elections filled all 81 senate seats with a broad range of parties.¹⁰ In December of 1997, Prime Minister Klaus' ODS coalition government resigned under pressure. There were disputes within the coalition as well as a sharp economic decline, but the final straw was a highly publicized ODS bribe scandal.¹¹ In January of 1998, the parliament, under an interim government, re-elected political independent Havel to another five-year term. Then after June elections, the Civic Democratic Party (CSSD) gained the most seats in the Chamber and party chairman Milos Zeman became Prime Minister.¹² In November one-third of the Senatorial seats turned over with the ODS retaining more seats than the CSSD thus causing a split majority in parliament.¹³ The Czech government overcame controversy and remained on the democratic path to NATO membership.

Interestingly, the scandals that forced Vaclav Klaus' government to resign occurred just a few months after NATO's formal invitation to accede. Thus, the subsequent elections in June of 1998 came at a critical juncture as NATO countries were individually ratifying Czech accession during the same period. This process validated the relationship between NATO expansion and strategy. Democracy was important to NATO membership because it ensured former East Bloc countries were no longer susceptible to authoritarian influence. NATO's strategy of collective security required the Czech government to peacefully overcome its scandal. When the democratic process prevailed, the Czech Republic contributed to the stability of the region.

Free Market Economy

Unlike democracy, the Washington Treaty did not directly address the importance of a free market economy. However, it can be inferred from the preamble pledge “to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area.”¹⁴ This conception can also be traced back to a 1949 strategy document that stated alliance members “should bear in mind that economic recovery and the attainment of economic stability constitute important elements of their security.”¹⁵ Then as now, promoting well-being contained economic implications. Furthermore, the Strategic Concept of 1999 committed the alliance to a broad approach to security that included economic factors.¹⁶ When considering expansion after the fall of communism, free market economies made sense. Western capitalism prevailed over Soviet centrally planned economies and free market economies provided a path to security for the former East Bloc.

Czechoslovakia emerged from communism at the end of 1989 bearing the shackles of forty years of failed economic planning. A 1990 International Monetary Fund paper summarized:

The history of Czechoslovakia’s economic development since World War II can be broadly characterized as one of generally declining growth rates. In some phases, performance has been affected by external developments, notably as a result of the oil price increases of the 1970s and the debt crisis of the early 1980s and its aftermath. From about the mid-1950s onward, however, successive governments have recognized that a main constraint on economic growth has been the system of central planning itself and its external counterpart, the emphasis on intra-CMEA (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) trade to the relative neglect of trade with the convertible currency area.¹⁷

Like most of the East Bloc, Czechoslovakia’s economy was at the opposite end of the spectrum from a free market economy. It was centrally planned by a handful of political elites, foreign trade was constrained to the East Bloc, and its currency was worthless outside the country.

After the Velvet Revolution, Finance Minister Vaclav Klaus led Czechoslovakia’s rapid transition to a free market. Interestingly, in the 1960’s he studied free-market economist Milton Friedman while working for the Ministry of Finance. Klaus was supposed to find fault with

Friedman's concepts, but instead he became a convert and was fired.¹⁸ With these free market ideals, he and several other economists developed the "Liberal Concept for Radical Economic Transformation," which laid out the four cornerstones of the new government's economic policy:

PRIVATIZATION: Re-privatization of property seized by the communists, as well as privatization of small business and state-run industries

FOREIGN TRADE LIBERALIZATION: Goods convertible under the weight of competition established convertible currency. Exchange rate initially pegged to the German Mark and protected in the short term by the Central Bank.

PRICE LIBERALIZATION: No controls on prices and limited wage control only in state-owned enterprises.

RESTRICTIVE MONETARY AND BUDGETARY POLICIES: Budget surplus and limited money supply to combat inflation. Parliamentary laws reinforced these measures so unemployment, bankruptcies, and other inflationary pressures did not change policy.¹⁹

The policy moved quickly away from centrally planned and state-controlled economies and attempted to put in place free market reforms. It also showed Czech recognition of the fact that economics played a big part in their reintegration with Europe; much like the role of NATO membership.

Under Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus' leadership, the Czech Republic fully embraced a free market economy. It became the leader of the former communist world in transitioning to a free market economy. Rapid privatization of state enterprises, liberalization of trade and prices, and tight fiscal and monetary policies produced continual GDP growth from 1993-1996, lowering inflation, and decreasing unemployment. Furthermore, in 1995 the Czech republic was the first former communist country to enter the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).²⁰ It was also the first one to receive an investment-grade credit rating from international credit institutions.²¹ These economic successes came as NATO began

seriously considering candidates for membership and they helped vault the Czech Republic to the top of the list.

When NATO's invitation came in mid-1997, the Czech economic boom had already reached its zenith and was in a recessive slide. In a November 1999 article entitled "Sombre," the *Economist* described the reversal this way:

Economically, the country has stumbled. It was for a time the envy of the former communist world, as it opened fast to the West and embraced the trappings of consumerism: the banks and department stores, the McDonald's restaurants and the fancy cosmetic shops. Now, its economy languishes in the trough of a two-year recession, and its main industries are virtually bankrupt. Even the economy in Slovakia, its formerly weaker half, has rebounded more strongly in the past year or so.²²

Despite the alarmist picture painted by the article, the Czech Republic did not abandon its free market ideals. Furthermore, NATO membership provided encouragement to stay the course because it symbolized a step towards integration with Europe.

Future membership in the EU also helped keep Czech free-market reforms on track. In November of 1999, the Czech government and the EU signed an agreement that prioritized the completion of structural economic reforms. The government pledged to reveal all hidden debts and liberalize all remaining price controls.²³ NATO's new strategic concept recognized the EU as a "mutually reinforcing organization," and as mentioned previously, the alliance recognized the increasing role of the EU in European security.²⁴ This established important links for aspiring NATO members like the Czech Republic. It validated the importance of economics in security issues.

Civilian Control of the Military

NATO's 1995 Enlargement Study stated that aspiring members needed to establish "appropriate democratic and civilian control of their defence force."²⁵ This recognized the

pervasive influence the Communist Party had in most East Bloc armed forces as well as the potential for these militaries to step into the power vacuum created by the Communist parties receding influence. This is where the NACC gave NATO a prominent role in former East Bloc countries like Czechoslovakia. Likewise, PfP would reinforce the process by assisting in the conversion to democratic vice communist control of the military.

Czech history provided strong tests of civil military relations. The military mobilized in 1938 to meet a potential German invasion but political leaders decided against resistance.²⁶ In 1948, the military stood aside again during the Communist takeover. Likewise, in 1968 the military did not resist the WTO invasion and subsequently was purged of all officers who showed political liberalization during the “Prague Spring” reforms.²⁷ Finally, during the Velvet Revolution, the Communist party leadership prepared the military for possible internal intervention. Fortunately, peace prevailed but not before the military pronounced it would “defend Communism.”²⁸ Although each occurrence created future disdain and public apathy, the military submitted to civilian authority. According to a comprehensive review by the Zurich based Center for International Studies, the military was not characterized by a “central political and bureaucratic structure...endowed with executive power.”²⁹ In fact, the initial struggle after the fall of communism was to reduce Soviet influence and end communist party control

Soviet influence was pervasive considering that at the end of the 1980s, 75,000 Soviet soldiers, 1,270 Soviet battle tanks, 2,505 Soviet armored vehicles, 180 Soviet attack helicopters, and 93 Soviet aircraft were in Czechoslovakia. The Ministry of Defense staff was loyal to Soviet leadership and controlled by advisors of the WTO Supreme Command.³⁰ However, after the Velvet Revolution, Czechoslovakia started to reform its military structure and all Soviet forces were withdrawn before the Velvet Divorce. President Havel replaced the communist party

secretary as the chairman of the Defense Council (similar to the NCA). A year later, Parliament selected an independent Inspector General (IG) to ensure the military functioned according to law. Additionally, Czechoslovakia not only eliminated communist party control of the military but also established organizations to “democratize” the troops. Former officers purged in the aftermath of the Prague Spring returned to help lead the process. At the same time, the government also strengthened the defense ministry’s (civilian) control of the military. The reformed civil military relationship proved durable during the months preceding the Velvet Divorce when Slovak leaders failed to replace the civilian Defense Minister with an active duty general officer.³¹

As with democracy and free markets, the Czech Republic moved quickly on further military reforms after the Velvet Divorce. New Defense Minister Antonin Baudys immediately started restructuring the military. He wanted to change it from a top-heavy Soviet style force to a brigade centric expeditionary force based on the NATO model. Furthermore, he fired officers involved in purges during communist control as well as those who ordered clampdowns during the Velvet Revolution. All of them were gone within six months making the Czech Republic the first former East Bloc country without any carryover leadership from the Cold War era. In an unprecedented move, the newly appointed Chief of Staff publicly apologized to Czech citizens for the army’s past role in suppressing demonstrations under the Communist regime.³² Czech participation in the NACC gave military and political leaders exposure to the mechanisms necessary to bring about such an extraordinary turnaround.

Desire to meet NATO membership requirements ensured the Czech’s bold defense reforms. In his 1995 study, “Central European Civil-Military Relations and NATO Expansion,” Jeffery Simon concluded the Czech Republic had the most “effective civilian defense ministry control of

the military," in the region.³³ Likewise, according to a 1997 State Department report, Czech, "civilian control of the military (was) unquestioned in both political and military circles." Interestingly, the report also said parliament was increasingly influential on defense issues, remained active in military restructuring plans, and would soon enact defense laws to formalize the military's mission as well as confirm civilian control of the military.³⁴ Additionally, the process of civilian control of the military became a public expectation. As one Czech commentator wrote:

In relation to entry to NATO, we have seen a considerable change in perceptions of the military. In the most recent period, the public has begun to distinguish between the responsibilities of politicians and those of soldiers. Politicians are seen as responsible for the current situation in the area of military procurement, for solving the problem of insufficient numbers in the Ministry of Defence and General Staff, and generally for dealing with the problem of making the military legitimate in society. Soldiers are seen as being responsible for training, morale in the military and for its relationship with democracy.³⁵

The NATO entrance requirement of civilian control of the military encouraged open dialogue and generated popular support for the concept. A military submitted to democratic authority also meant improved security in the region; again validating NATO's Strategic Concept.

Relations with Neighbors

NATO's experience in the Balkans produced a focus on aspiring members relations with their neighbors as well as a concern for ethnic issues. According to the September 1995 enlargement study, aspiring members had to have:

Demonstrated a commitment to and respect for OSCE norms and principles, including the resolution of ethnic disputes, external territorial disputes including irredentist claims or internal jurisdictional disputes by peaceful means.³⁶

NATO's Strategic Concept was evolving to collective security throughout the Euro-Atlantic region. It was important for aspiring members to get along with neighboring countries and for any ethnic problems to be manageable without spilling over into neighboring countries.

As the Czech republic prepared to receive NATO's expansion invitation, government-to-government relations with Slovakia were sound. Despite minor disputes left over from the 1993 split, the two countries were able to amicably work out a small adjustment to their border.³⁷ Relations probably soured somewhat when the Czechs were invited to join NATO and the Slovaks were not. However, last September Czech President Havel received a hero's welcome in Slovakia on his first official visit since the Velvet Divorce.³⁸ Furthermore, as a new NATO member, the Czech Republic is encouraged to assist Pfp partner Slovakia as much as possible in any future membership bid.

Because of historical bonds and economics, Czech relations with Austria remained sound during the expansion process. In 1997, Austria was the Czech Republic's sixth-largest foreign direct investor. Construction of the Temelin nuclear power plant near the Czech/Austrian border did however cause some tension between the two. While NATO considered Czech accession, the operational date of the plant continued to slip because of protests and construction delays. Recently, Austria unsuccessfully attempted to halt construction via the Czech Republic's EU membership bid.³⁹ Because Austria belongs to the EAPC, NATO provides an avenue of discussion for them with the Czech Republic. It will be interesting to see if the recent ascendancy of an ultra-right wing party in Austria clouds the relationship further.

Czech bilateral ties with Poland improved throughout the NATO expansion process. Initially, after the break with Slovakia a perception of "Czech Exceptionalism" threatened relations not only with Poland but also with Visegrad partners Hungary and Slovakia (four most likely NATO entrants). The reasoning was that because the Czech's perceived themselves as West European they were automatically qualified for integration; thus they didn't want to be associated with their Central European neighbors.⁴⁰ This was fostered in part by the Czech's fast

start out of the expansion gate; they appeared to be the early front-runner for entrance. Even if Czech exceptionalism existed, it was no longer present by January of 1997 when the countries Prime Ministers meet to harmonize their approaches to NATO and EU membership.⁴¹ Czech/Polish relations were also buoyed by their joint PfP participation.

Czech relations with Germany remained strong throughout the expansion process. The two countries cooperated on a wide range of economic, cultural, foreign policy, and security issues and the relationship was cemented by the fact that Germany continued to be the Czech Republic's leading foreign investor. German Chancellor Helmut Kohl traveled to Prague in January of 1997 to sign a Joint Declaration addressing the difficult legacy of the WW II.⁴² This did not eliminate the historical animosity over the issues concerning the German occupation or the reprisals against Sudeten Germans under Communist Czechoslovakia but current German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder recently visited the Czech Republic and reaffirmed the reconciliation process.⁴³

Although, Czech-German relations have been somewhat strained by ethnic issues, a bigger issue during the NATO expansion process was a subtle societal tendency towards xenophobia. It was highlighted most recently in the mistreatment of the Roma (gypsy) population. The issue was brought to light internationally in the fall of 1997 after a Czech TV special documented the improved lifestyle of Roma living in Canada. There was a Roma run on visas for Canada that embarrassed the Czech government when many asked why everyone wanted to leave. Although much of the migration was economically motivated (national unemployment around 4%, but closer to 70% for Roma), the media attention focused on several horrific acts of violence against the Roma.⁴⁴ Further complicating matters, last October the Czech town of Usti nad Labem erected a wall to separate a run down Roma public apartment building from the general

populace. It sparked such international ire that the EU announced the Czech bid for membership would be in jeopardy until it dealt with the problem. Recognizing the gravity of this threat, the Czech government immediately condemned the town's actions.⁴⁵ It is interesting to note that this issue as well as the Temelin nuclear power plant dispute with Austria was addressed via the Czech's EU membership bid. As mentioned previously, NATO's revised Strategic Concept recognized the important relationship between the EU and NATO in building a stable European security environment.

Interoperability with NATO Standards

Countries with oppressive political systems, countries with designs on their neighbors, countries with militaries unchecked by civilian control, or with closed economic systems...need not apply.

— President Bill Clinton

President Clinton ominously left interoperability off his subliminal list of NATO entrance requirements. NATO interoperability is defined as “the ability of systems, units or forces to provide services to and accept services from other systems, units, or forces and to use the services so exchanged to enable them to operate effectively together.”⁴⁶ With NATO’s revised Strategic Concept committed to out of area peacekeeping operations, interoperability becomes critical to the effective use of alliance military forces conducting those operations.

As mentioned previously, the Czech Republic stepped up military reforms after the split from Slovakia. Force reductions continued, but more importantly, old leadership was purged and the force was realigned under a NATO friendly structure. After the Velvet Revolution and before PfP, the Czech military (ACR) served under UN Operations in Angola, Namibia, Somalia, Iraq, Yugoslavia (Croatia), Mozambique, Liberia, and Georgia. The Czech Republic joined PfP in March of 1994 and welcomed the opportunity “to gradually upgrade the

interoperability and compatibility of our forces.”⁴⁷ During that year alone, they held joint military exercises with the Netherlands, France, Poland, and Germany.⁴⁸ By then, the ACR had pared its six-tiered organization into three levels (General Staff, Corps, and Brigade) with the crown jewel being the Rapid Deployment Brigade. It garnered much of the defense budget and was designed to substantially contribute to NATO’s revised military structure. The top priority after the brigade was language training for the officer corps.⁴⁹ The Czech Republic established PfP as a critical step to achieving interoperability with NATO standards and it reorganized its force structure to contribute to NATO’s evolving out of area operations.

As NATO worked on its Enlargement Study during 1995, it also enhanced PfP’s role in preparing partners for membership with the Planning and Review Process (PARP). The biennial process was aligned with NATO’s Defense Planning process and started with partners identifying their defense plans, budgets and areas of interest for operability. The alliance then took that data and produced a Planning and Review Assessment (PRA) for each partner to consider in defense planning. The ACR based its planning on the PRA as well as NATO’s newly published enlargement study. According to an ACR officer, the military fell short of meeting some of its original PARP objectives for three reasons: lack of focus in the Ministry of Defense, lack of leadership in the ACR and lack of money.⁵⁰ His explanation sounded much like the lament of soldiers experiencing force draw-downs in the post Cold War era: dwindling budgets, increased requirements levied by civilian leadership, and military leadership unwilling or unable to say no to the requirements. NATO’s evolving strategic concept promised more of the same as the alliance took over peacekeeping in the Bosnia during the same time period.

As mentioned above, the ACR brought peacekeeping experience into PfP. Their largest contingent (1000 troops) served in the Balkans under UNPROFOR. They operated with forces

from several NATO countries that were also serving under the UN. This helped reveal their weaknesses in communication equipment and language skills. Furthermore, the ACR captured the experience of those rotating out of peacekeeping duties by using them as cadre for a peacekeeping training course in the Czech Republic. When NATO took over peacekeeping duties from the UN, the ACR continued to support the operation at the same troop level. When SFOR replaced IFOR, a Czech helicopter detachment was added and the ACR made great strides toward NATO interoperability, particularly language skills and communication equipment.⁵¹ ACR personnel became familiar with NATO standards, procedures and doctrine and the Czech commitment to active participation certainly solidified their expansion bid. They demonstrated the linkage of NATO expansion to the revised strategy of out of area peacekeeping. By participating as partners, they assisted NATO in its collective security function.

When NATO's invitation came in July of 1997, the Czech Republic's economy was in a recession. Although military spending was declining, many important steps towards interoperability were already made: a NATO command structure with a modernization strategy that emphasized communication, intelligence, English skills, and command and control. The Czechs remained one of the largest per capita contributors to SFOR and had participated in 27 PfP exercises.⁵² Likewise, the Czech Republic was the first of the new alliance members to integrate their airspace management systems with NATO's air defense network. Although, defense spending had slipped to 1.7% of GDP in 1997, the Czech government reversed the trend and increased spending by 0.1% per annum to reach the NATO target of 2.0% in the year 2000 and most of the initial interoperability goals were met.⁵³ There was a realization in the alliance that full integration was not realistic but the Czech Republic took NATO's revised strategic focus on peacekeeping and cooperation and translated it into a solid membership bid.

Interoperability was not complete but the ACR was committed to actively participating and contributing to NATO's integrated military structure and ultimately to the collective security of the region.

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Part 4

Summary

As we enter the 21st Century, NATO is at the very hub of Euro-Atlantic security. We have taken in three new members, and are preparing for further invitations. We have built solid institutions for cooperation with Russia and Ukraine. The Partnership for Peace and Euro-Atlantic Cooperation Council have provided a framework within which every country in Europe can work together to solve security challenges. We have taken on two major missions in the Balkans, to help bring peace and lasting stability to an area that has, for too long, enjoyed neither. And the Alliance remains the principal forum in which Europe and North America preserve our common security interests and uphold our common values. This is an agenda that speaks for itself.

—NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson

Lord Robertson's comments summarized NATO's strategic environment in the post-Cold War era.¹ Furthermore, it is quite evident that the alliance's Strategic Concept focuses on providing collective security for the Euro-Atlantic region and that part of this process is future NATO expansion. It is imperative that the alliance only admits countries that can contribute. As one commentator wrote, the alliance needs "military contributors to security" not "free riders of security."²

The Czech Republic's admission process provides areas to consider to ensure future aspirants are contributors and not free riders. First, democracy, free market economy and civilian control of the military are hallmarks of NATO because they ensure the stability of aspiring members. The Washington Treaty specifically mentions democracy as a founding

principle. It was not surprising that the Czech Republic made the first round of expansion while Slovakia was not invited. The two countries split because the former embraced democracy while the latter stayed closer to its authoritarian past. Likewise, a free market economy has become synonymous with the “well-being” principle of the original Washington treaty. As the Czech’s learned, NATO’s new Strategic Concept stresses the parallel roles of a stable economy and military capability in providing security. Pragmatically, the Balkan crises threatened European economic stability more than they threatened the territorial integrity of NATO countries. Civilian control of the military is also an established alliance tradition. Like market economies, it is the antithesis of the old Soviet totalitarian society. Countries that cannot reign in their military are a threat to security. These three requirements should remain for any future expansion.

While NATO’s first three entrance requirements are automatic, the final two require additional study. First, how well a country gets along with its neighbors is not a complete entrance requirement. Obviously, the alliance does not want to admit a state at war with a neighboring country or one that could easily go to war with a neighboring state. Under Article V of the treaty, NATO would be compelled to defend the new member state. Expansion is supposed to strengthen the alliance not bring problems to it. In the post Cold war era, another consideration is internal relations with ethnic minorities in the state. The problems are easy to see in a failed state like Yugoslavia but what about Czech mistreatment of its gypsy population? Should that have been a discriminating factor? The pragmatic answer is “no” as long as the problem can be contained without outside assistance. The problem then becomes one of credibility. If NATO accepts the Czech Republic but the EU rejects them, then there is a divergence with an organization NATO recognizes as critical to the complex web of collective

security. The relationship between NATO and the EU is definitely an area for future study, particularly as the EU focuses its attention on military capabilities.

While not as problematic as relations with neighbors, interoperability with NATO military standards can be a troublesome criteria for membership. There is a difference between integration and interoperability although the line between them often gets blurred. The Czech Republic and the other East Bloc countries had a long way to come just to reach interoperability. In the words of an ACR officer, “What we inherited from the past is not interoperable with our future, both technological and mental.³ Many commentators chastised the Czechs and the other would be entrants for not being far enough along in their interoperability efforts as membership approached. However, Admiral Gehman, NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic, pointed out that Germany took nearly five years and Spain over 15 years to integrate into NATO’s military structure. He concluded that interoperability was not what it could be but that it was good enough and more importantly the path to improvement had been laid out.⁴ The Czech Republic made definitive strides towards achieving interoperability and eventually they will be fully integrated into NATO’s military structure. The question for future expansion should not be if the aspirant is at a given level of interoperability but do they have a sound plan for achieving interoperability that supports eventual integration into the military structures of NATO.

Although not a formal entrance requirement from NATO’s 1995 Enlargement study, participation in PfP and experience in IFOR/SFOR prepared the Czech Republic for NATO membership. They learned how important interoperability was and where they were deficient. Likewise, NATO’s revised Strategic Concept specifically lists Crisis Management (peacekeeping) and Partnership (PfP) as important tools to enhance security. Participation in

peacekeeping operations and in PfP gave the Czech Republic the tools to become security providers instead of free riders.

The important link between PfP and future membership is captured in NATO's recently announced Membership Action Plan (MAP). Although not a criteria list for membership, NATO says the program assists aspiring countries in preparations for possible membership. Not surprisingly, NATO also says active participation in PfP and EAPC is essential to the program.⁵ However, why do partners need to join the alliance if they can provide security without actually being in the alliance? Obviously, this is a simplistic but important question to ask. Consider the case of the historically neutral countries of Austria, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland. All are PfP participants but none have signed up for MAP. Likewise, strategically critical countries like Russia and Ukraine are non-MAP PfP participants. Does membership signify the transition from security free rider to provider? If so where do non-MAP PfP participants fit? Conversely, is there an expectation of membership on the part of the nine MAP PfP participants? From the language of the MAP, NATO seems to be taking a cautious approach to future expansion. This is also an area for future study.

As a final thought, consider what appeared to be NATO's military strategy in the recent Kosovo crisis. SACEUR, General Wesley Clark, positioned airplanes at so many locations that it appeared as though he wanted Milosevic to feel surrounded with air strikes launched from every direction. That reflects NATO's vision of the future, a Euro-Atlantic region filled with security providers that eliminate threats before they are effective. Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, and Macedonia are all MAP PfP. If they eventually become NATO members, Serbia would literally be surrounded and figuratively, NATO would be closer to its vision of being a far reaching Euro-Atlantic collective security organization.

Notes

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² Jeffrey Simon, "The New NATO Members: Will They Contribute?" *NDU Strategic Forum* No. 160, April 1999, n.p., on-line, Internet, 28 Dec 1999, at <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/strforum/forum160.html>.

³ Morrocco and Taverna.

⁴ Harold Gehman, "NATO Commander: New Allies May need Five Years to Integrate," in *Defense Week*, 17 Feb 98, 9.

⁵ NATO, "Membership Action Plan," *NATO Press Release*, 24 Apr 99, n.p., on-line, Internet, 5 Jan 00, at <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-066e.htm>.

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